

# Public Health Makes it Easier to Apply for Distressed Cemetery Funds

**DOVER** – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is changing its Distressed Cemetery Fund guidelines to encourage cemetery owners, managers or caretakers with minimal resources to apply for funds by making the application process more attractive and efficient. The goal is to assist those that have shown an ongoing commitment to repairing cemeteries by increasing the maximum award amount, decreasing the match requirement, and reducing the waiting period between applications.

The Distressed Cemetery Fund was established in 2009 to provide for the preservation of cemeteries, including small and older cemeteries that lack funds for long-term care and maintenance, by supporting repair and improvement projects that are outside normal maintenance activities.

The Fund, which is overseen by the Delaware Cemetery Board, is maintained through the receipt of a \$2 portion of the cost of each death certificate issued and cemetery registration fees received. Individuals and organizations may also make contributions or bequests to the Fund.

The registration fee for a cemetery is \$10 every five years or until change in ownership occurs. Volunteers can register an abandoned cemetery. A registration form can be accessed from the DPH website at <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hp/DECB.html>.

Previously, the guidelines allowed for a maximum award of \$10,000 every two years from the date the previous award was received and required a 100 percent match in real dollars and/or documented volunteer hours. The Board has increased the maximum award amount to \$15,000 and reduced the waiting period

to every 18 months from the date the previous award was received. The match requirement has been eased from 100 percent to 50 percent of the requested amount in real dollars and/or documented volunteer hours.

Prior applicants who received an award under the old guidelines may apply 18 months from the date their last award was received.

Cemeteries must be registered before they can apply for Distressed Cemetery Funds. An application package must be submitted two weeks before a scheduled board meeting. The next Delaware Cemetery Board meeting will be held on Aug. 9, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., in the Delaware Room at the Delaware Public Archives, 121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. North, Dover, DE 19901. Applications must be submitted by July 24, 2017, to the Chief Administrative Officer, Delaware Cemetery Board, Health Statistics Center, Jesse Cooper Building, 417 Federal St., Dover, DE 19901.

The application package must include photos of the area needing repairs, financial information, a small scale map, and three written vendor quotes. The Board's Chief Administrative Officer will review for completeness and send onto the Board for review. The Board will meet with the applicant during an executive session and will vote on the application during the public meeting. A written closeout report is required six months after the receipt of the award and must include a report on how the funds were used, pictures of the work completed, copy of canceled checks to the vendor, and vendor invoices paid.

In the past, funds have been used to repair tombstones/monuments, repair or replace fences/stone walls/gates, landscaping, remove trees and brush, purchase or repair lawn equipment, purchase sheds, topsoil and seeding, conducting of perimeter surveys and plot plans.

To date, the Delaware Cemetery Board has approved 23 awards amounting to \$173,932 to 17 cemeteries. Four cemeteries received funding more than once.

The five members of the Delaware Cemetery Board are appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services. Administrative support to the Board is provided by the Division of Public Health. In addition to administering the Fund, the Cemetery Board is authorized to: promulgate rules and regulations for the registration of cemeteries; designate a cemetery as "distressed" based on standards set forth in the rules and regulations; authorize payment to a distressed cemetery from the Fund; require a thorough accounting of each recipient's use of money from the Fund; refer cemetery complaints to appropriate State agencies or other organizations; and address specific cemetery issues as requested by the Governor or the Delaware General Assembly.

All theft or vandalism of a cemetery should immediately be reported to the local police. The Board refers complaints to the police, Delaware Attorney General's Consumer Protection Agency, the Better Business Bureau, or city/county officials.

To learn about registering a cemetery, or for more information on the Distressed Cemetery Fund visit: <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hp/DECB.html> and <http://delcode.delaware.gov/title29/c079a/index.shtml> (29 Del. C., c. 79A).

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving

the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.